

John M. Owens, Esq.
9 W. Boulevard Parkway
Rochester, New York 14612
(585) 663-5019
jmowensesq@aol.com

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Most Reverend Matthew H. Clark
Bishop of Rochester
1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, New York 14624

Re: Eastern Greece/Charlotte Planning Group

Dear Bishop Clark:

It is my pleasure to serve as chairman of the Eastern Greece/Charlotte planning group, having served on the committee for some seven plus years. As such, I have received your letter dated June 18, 2008, reviewed the same with our committee, and now wish to briefly respond.

As requested in your letter, we have now begun to work on a new plan that will supercede the 2005 plan previously approved. Toward that end we have scheduled more frequent committee meetings, and have begun to form the necessary sub-committees. We anticipate that the process will take 18-24 months for completion.

As you suggest in your letter, it will be the goal of our plan to increase the vitality of our faith communities while recognizing the difficult times ahead, due to priest shortages, changing demographics, differences in faith practice patterns, and financial constraints. Many good people, under the direction of our previous chairman, Michael Shea, diligently and prayerfully considered the same problems while preparing our 2005 plan.

Many of these people continue to serve, and many now question the role of this committee. We are well aware that this committee does not deal with the issue of Catholic education, but surely we are very much impacted by the recent decisions concerning our schools. Yet while all were trying to adjust to the announced school closures came further changes impacting our planning group with the decision concerning Holy Name of Jesus and Our Lady of Mercy, two parishes integral to our planning group.

The announcement dealing with two of our parishes came without input from our committee. Certainly we recognize that any such decision must be made by the Diocese, and ultimately by you. No one questions that you must make that final decision, but we do wonder why we exist as a group if our input is not sought prior to such changes that have a dramatic impact on our group as a whole, and upon our parishoners in particular. Though the outcome may have been

inevitable, our input could have been sought.

This has been the major subject of conversation at each of the two meetings we have had since your June 18, 2008 letter. There does not appear to be a good answer to the question when proffered. I cannot overstate the hurt that our people are now feeling and the difficulty this causes as we try to go forward. Therefore, as we go forward, part of our work will involve the healing process for all involved as we plan for the future.

While the committee will continue to prepare a new plan, it is our sincere hope that we will be included in decisions, such as that affecting Our Lady of Mercy and Holy Name of Jesus, should subsequent decisions need to be made affecting any parish in our group.

Very truly yours,

John M. Owens